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TRANSCRIPT OF REMARKS BY SECRETARY OF STATE DEAN RUSK
ON HOWARD K. SMITH'S "NEWS AND COMMENT" PROGRAM,
AMERICAN BROADCASTING COMPANY TELEVISION, SUNDAY,
SEPTEMBER 30, 1962, AT 10:30 P.M., E.D.T.

MR. JOHN SCALI: Mr. Secretary, in the past we have said that the arms build-up in Cuba is defensive even though Castro has been supplied with missiles. Is it possible now that Russia's plan to build a so-called fishing port tips the balance from a defensive to an offensive build-up?

SECRETARY RUSK: Well, those announcements have to do with action to be taken in the future. We will be watching that very carefully and closely indeed, and we will make a judgment when we see what in fact actually happens. Now, I don't think that we ought to play with words on this question of defensive and offensive weapons. Any weapon is offensive if you are on the wrong end of it. But the configuration of the military forces in Cuba is a configuration of defensive capability. What we are concerned about is the development of any significant offensive capability against Cuba's neighbors in the Caribbean, or against this country, and we are keeping a very close watch indeed on just that point. We have very great power in that area, and the President has made it very clear that whatever arms are in Cuba will stay in Cuba, and that there will be no effort by Castro to move these arms into other countries.

Q. Mr. Secretary, how will the Government be able to make a judgment of when the arms build-up shifts from a defensive to an offensive status?

A. Well, that would be a matter of detail, affirmation and judgment based upon all the military views available, and that would be done with

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our own military advisers taking a full part in an assessment of capabilities.

Q. How would you evaluate the Soviet arms build-up in Cuba in terms of the total Soviet cold war strategy?

A. Oh, I think that the Soviets have had to face the fact that this regime in Cuba has been getting into very serious trouble indeed on the Island. Foodstuffs are in very short supply, production has dropped off severely, there has been undoubtedly a sense of uneasiness and alarm on the part of the rulers there. They have called, for example, for a considerable number of what seemed to have to be phony alerts. I think they may be trying to draw attention away from some of the problems that they are having on the Island. I think that the Cuban situation is certainly becoming very expensive indeed for the bloc to shore up the failures there; but it is also a very serious problem for us and has to be treated as such.

Q. Mr. Secretary, which is the greatest danger to the United States, the potential alienating of much of world opinion by taking firm action against Cuba, or the potential loss of prestige and respect for permitting Russia to outflank us and build a base for subversion next door to us?

A. Well, I think neither one of those is a full basis for deciding what action is right and wise and necessary in a given situation. It is clear that the power of the United States is such that you could put armed forces ashore in Cuba, but that means a lot of casualties and it means a lot of Cuban casualties, it means bloodshed. And if we could find an answer without that, we should try to do so.

But the question of prestige is primarily a question of solidarity in this Hemisphere. I think that general world opinion is much less interested in Cuba than we are here, for quite understandable reasons. And we have seen here in this Hemisphere and are seeing a rapidly growing solidarity with respect to Cuba. The Communists' voices in the Hemisphere have become more vocal. But on the other hand, the Castro regime

regime has been losing the sympathy of what might be called the democratic left. It is quite clear that the moderates and conservatives throughout the Hemisphere are losing their complacency about Castroism and are becoming more and more active and concerned about it. There has been a dramatic change since the Costa Rica conference of 1960, reflected in the Punta del Este conference in January of this year, and that movement of both peoples and governments in this Hemisphere continues. And I am now talking to Foreign Ministers here in New York, and we will be talking to them next week to see what further steps we ought to take in the situation.

Q. Mr. Secretary, in this coming week of course you will have the so-called informal meeting with the Inter-American Foreign Ministers. Could you tell us why this meeting is an informal one and not a formal one?

A. Well, the principal reason is to have a chance to meet as quickly as possible and without all of the problems that are concerned in convening a formal meeting under the Organization of the OAS Charter and encounter many of the other questions that exist there among the different members of the Hemisphere. The Foreign Ministers were gathering here for the United Nations General Assembly. We thought that we ought to take advantage of that fact to meet just as informally as possible. It is not a meeting which can in fact take decisions under the charters of the OAS because it is so very informal, but I already know from my own talks here in preparation for that meeting that it will be a very profitable and worthwhile meeting.

Q. Mr. Secretary, in the past you have put a great premium on the desirability of unity within the Inter-American family. Unhappily, several Latin American countries have dragged their feet on taking effective action against Castro. Is it possible that at this informal meeting that you will come up with some sort of plan whereby the nations most immediately threatened by Castroism in the Central American and Caribbean area might join with the United States in some kind of tougher action?

A. Well,

A. Well, that was already anticipated in the Punta del Este conference in January. One of the resolutions that was passed, I think by a seventeen-vote majority, did provide for joint actions by groups within the Hemisphere to deal with this specific question if necessary. We will of course continue not only our consultation with the other countries within the Caribbean area, but we will continue our close cooperative work with them on matters of common security interest -- for example, on surveillance in the Caribbean, in being sure that there is no illicit arms traffic in the Caribbean area coming out of Cuba, and a variety of other actions which are being taken behind the scenes with the full cooperation of the governments in that area.

Q. Mr. Secretary, on another point, we find that many of the Cuban exile organizations in the United States are complaining rather bitterly in some cases against the restrictions being put on them by the American Government. Many of them have all sort of plans for returning to the homeland. Why aren't we supporting some of these exile organizations in the United States in allowing them more freedom?

A. Well, we have, as you know, been giving considerable support to the refugees as such.

Q. Right.

A. Now, as happens so frequently with refugees or exile organizations, there is very little unity among them. There is a contest for influence. They find it difficult to work together. This is the principal problem insofar as any single organization is concerned. Also I think it has to be borne in mind that there are anti-Castro people on the Island of Cuba who need to be recognized as having a real stake and part in this whole problem. So that I realize that there are certain groups or certain committees that feel that they ought to be a chosen instrument of some sort. But the great problem and the great need is for all non-Castro Cubans to get together as closely as possible in a great unity of purpose to restore Cuba to the democratic life of the Western Hemisphere.

Q. Mr. Secretary, you

Q. Mr. Secretary, you have mentioned the anti-Castro underground in Cuba, which we know exists. There are also many people who say that we should take a more active role in supporting this anti-Castro underground, perhaps by supplying them weapons and giving them encouragement through other means. What do you say to this?

A. Well, I obviously can't get seriously into that question. The anti-Castro elements in Cuba do know that they have the encouragement and support of everyone in this Hemisphere who is opposed to Castroism, but I think that this is the sort of thing or question I can't really get into.

Q. Is it our information, sir, that considerable anti-Castro sentiment exists in Cuba?

A. I think that that is very definitely our impression and that this is growing, because of the ruthlessness of the regime and the great severity of the regime on the people and their economy and their traditional way of life. I think we know that the Castro regime has great organized support. It has the accoutrements of a police state, but it also has underneath it what has happened in so many dictatorships of that sort -- deep resentment on the part of the people themselves.

Q. Mr. Secretary, the Republicans on Capitol Hill seem to be making quite an issue of the Administration policy on Cuba. Now, granted that both Republicans and Democrats have united behind this single resolution supporting the President, do you think that many of the Republican demands which may come up during the election are really political in nature?

A. Well, I think that in the present campaign that candidates of both parties are going to be and should be talking about Cuba with the people in their constituencies. I do not believe that except for an occasional instance that this debate can take on a straight partisan line. Cuba has been a problem for two Administrations. It is still an unsolved problem. And in my discussions with the Committees and the leaders in our Congress, I find that the Democrats and the Republicans are equally concerned

concerned about the problem and that they are equally concerned about finding the right and wise course of action under all the circumstances.

We have a national problem here in front of us, and I think vigorous debate is to be desired, and is in any event unavoidable, but I would hope that what is necessarily a national problem does not break itself up into alleged partisan points of view, because I feel and know that the leadership of both parties are deeply concerned -- concerned that no satisfactory answer has yet been found and that the penetration of this Hemisphere by Castro Communism is something which cannot be accepted in the Hemisphere and by the United States.

Q. Mr. Secretary, in discussing Cuba with some of the Foreign Ministers here, I know that you have heard the view expressed by some that Cuba is a United States problem. Do you agree that this is a strictly United States problem?

A. Well, it is in the first instance a major problem for this Hemisphere because of the commitments of the Hemisphere under its treaties and charters and in those commitments the United States plays a very important role. It is a problem for us because it is a problem in the Hemisphere as well. It would be a problem for us had we not had the Hemisphere organizations. But it is here. But it is also a part of a worldwide struggle for freedom. It is involved in a worldwide confrontation between the Communist bloc and the free world, and therefore it is one of those problems which is of concern to all the free world because this struggle is relentless and unending in every continent, and no one can be, I think, disregarding of it.

Q. Mr. Secretary, since this is part of a worldwide Communist plot, could we not soon be approached with a deal to shut down some of our bases overseas in return for which Russia would close down her base in Cuba?

A. This is not a negotiable point. This would not be a way to meet this struggle for freedom. You cannot support freedom in one place

place by surrendering freedom in another. In any event, we have special commitments here in this Hemisphere under our Hemisphere charters, and we cannot connect in negotiations or in trades the problem of Cuba with the defense of freedom in other places. No. This is not on.

Q. This would also apply to any effort to link Cuba, say, with Berlin?

A. Exactly.

Q. Mr. Secretary, are you a baseball fan?

A. Yes. I have been for many years.

Q. Do you keep close tab on what the lowly Washington Senators are doing?

A. Well, some of my friends think that I am a man of little conscience because I am automatically a hometown fan. I was a New York Yankee fan for many years, and now I am a Washington Senator fan. It hasn't given me too much to cheer about this season, but nevertheless it is a good ball club and I have enjoyed following them.

Q. Do you have any hope that next year it will wind up any better?

A. Well, when you wind up in the cellar, you always say "Wait until next year!"

MR. SCALI: Thank you very much, Mr. Secretary.

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